

RESERVATION	
PERMANENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6 YRS.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 YRS.	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 YR.	<input type="checkbox"/>

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SIGHT SAVING CLASSES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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SIGHT SAVING CLASSES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. (By Prof. O. Wanecek.)

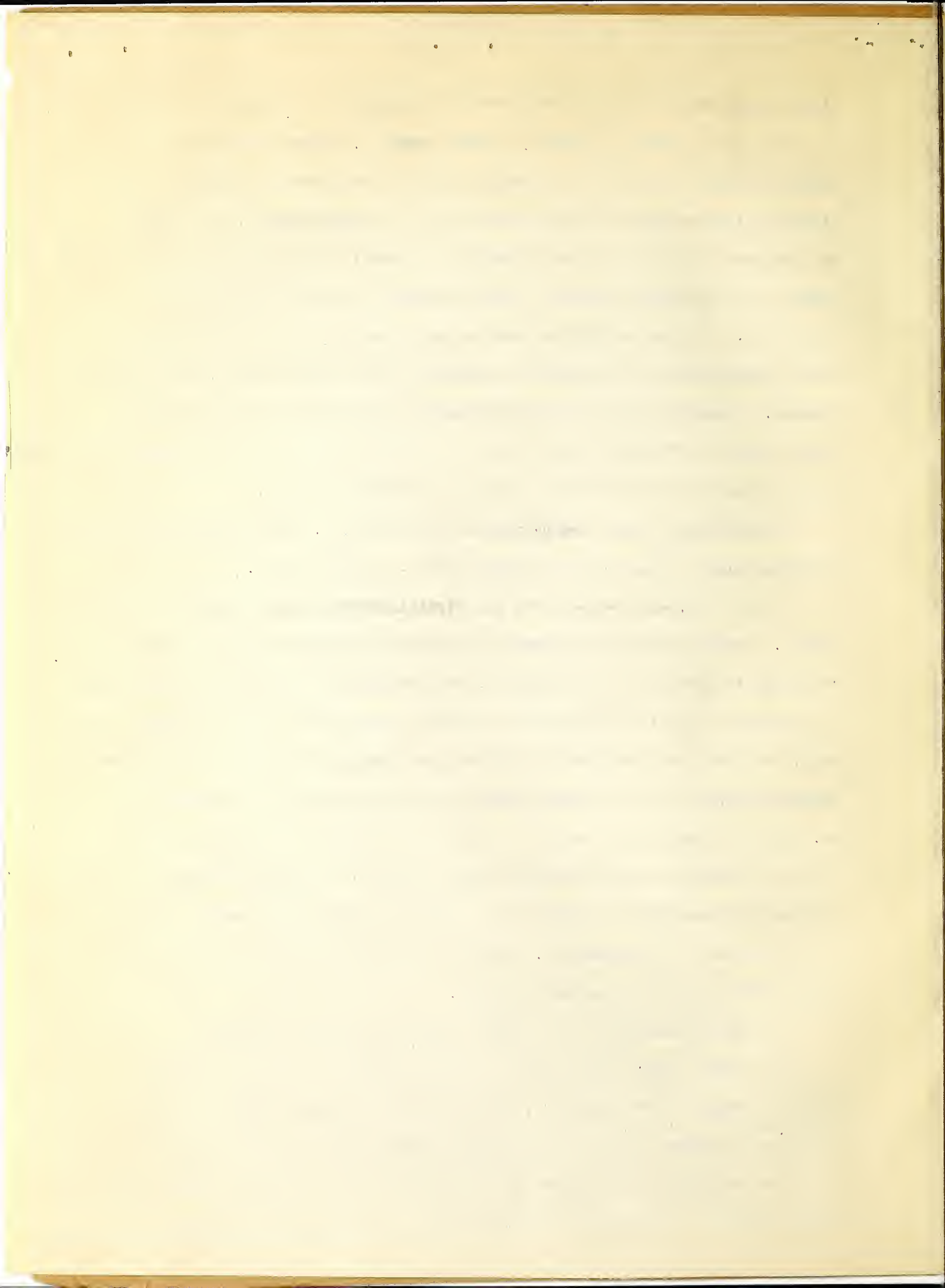
During his stay in London in 1909, Edward E. Allen, Superintendent of Perkins Institution, had his attention called to the special classes for near-sighted children which were introduced by Dr. N. Bishop Harman. Dr. Harman had expressed his ideas on the foundation of schools for myopes at a congress *for school* hygiene, and in 1908 he had been asked to establish such a school as an experiment. This new school was watched with great interest all over England, and the example was soon followed especially by the larger cities, as London and Glasgow. James Kerr says in his book "School vision and the myopic scholar" which appeared a few years ago, that in London alone there were 915 school "seats" ~~that~~ that took care of at least 2000 children with defective eyes.

With financial help from Perkins Institution, Mr. Allen succeeded in opening the first sight saving class in Roxbury, Mass. in April, 1913.

It is true, this was not really the first effort in this line in the United States. Already in 1911 children with considerable vision from the classes for the blind in Cleveland were allowed to use pen and ink as well as printed books in so far as this did not interfere with the instructions of the oculists. In 1913, the year when the school in Roxbury was started, the Board of Education in Cleveland opened the first sight saving class in Ohio under the direction of Mr. Irwin, the well known expert on work for the blind. The splendid results of this class brought about that sight saving became a very important matter in Ohio, which may be seen from the fact that in 1925 this state could boast a number of 48 classes for the near-sighted. At the same time there were in all of the United States more than 220 such classes.

Since 1925 the number has risen from 220 to 318 in 86 cities.

The sight saving classes have in all the English speaking countries a different organization than ours. There the near-sighted children are only assembled for those branches of instruction that require application of the eye, while the so-called oral work is carried through in the regular classes among the seeing children. The idea is predominant that the nearsighted children should not



be isolated from the world of the seeing. This is a thought that is very valuable, but is not practical from methodical and educational reasons, according to our opinion. Especially in Cleveland this principle is carefully adhered to. Even the blind are educated along that line in the public schools, and are only brought together in the so-called braille-classes to practice braille, the writing of the blind. This system seems to us somewhat hazardous, because the education of the blind is made to be too dependant on the word and the acquisition of concrete ideas is questionable. This last consideration has been perhaps the most important reason for the establishment of independent sight-saving schools as they are preferred on the European continent.

But the Anglicised version can be explained by its history. The plans for these schools were stimulated by the thought of the increasing short-sightedness which has become so prevalent that about 50% of the young students wear glasses. To stop this increase seemed to be the first important task. The sight saving classes should enroll not only the difficult and extreme cases, but should also bring effective relief to the milder cases. This brings about that in the sight saving classes we find children with a degree of vision that would not be considered at all for our "Sehschwachenschulen". Thus in England those cases are admitted that show a diopter number of 4, while we for our schools have determined at least 8 diopters as normal.

The selection of children for the sight saving classes in Cleveland is made according to the following principles:

1. Children with 6/24 vision.
2. Near-sighted children, having more than 8 diopters.
3. Children with progressive myopia
4. Children with weak eyes which are easily getting tired.
5. Children with astigmatism, which can be relieved only up to 6/24
6. Children with spots, dimness, leukomas, with varying sight, or those having difficulties with the eyes.
7. Children with inflammation of the cornea, if the sight has not improved after a rest period of three months.
8. Children with cataract, congenital or acquired, with a vision of 6/15 or less.
9. Children with congenital malformations with a vision of 6/21 or less.
10. Children who show chronic diseases of the background of the eyes with a vision of 6/12 or less.



We mention as a comparison, that the German Blindenlehrerkongress in Konigsberg in 1928, explained the term "weak-sighted" as between 1/25 to 1/5 of normal sight.

The American sight saving classes are very well arranged. A committee (Clear Type Publishing Committee, Upper Montclair, N.J.) publishes splendidly printed books for these classes, using simplified capitals and small letters in Roman type. A number of laws regulate the various problems regarding these classes in the State of Ohio. (See School Laws of Ohio, No. 7755, 7757-7761, 7763). Mental tests that are repeated every two years, have shown that the Binet tests are very well applicable also to the near-sighted children, but they also prove that these children are somewhat behind their normal contemporaries.

In regard to eye defects, America has gradually adopted a sub-division of the sight-saving classes. The one group represent all children with chronic eye defect or general low vision, thus corresponding to our schools for the weak-sighted. The other group admits all students who suffer from progressive myopia, That is a division that already has been affected by us. But we all need to experiment in this field, as the question "What shall we do with the near-sighted?" cannot yet be answered satisfactorily, at least not from the methodical standpoint.





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